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July 18, 2002

Ms. Marianne Horinko
 Assistant Administrator
 Environmental Protection Agency
 Office of Solid Waste and Emergency Response
 1200 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
 MC 5101T
 Washington, D.C. 20460

RE: Followup on June 20, 2002 Hearing in Washington DC of the
 Subcommittee on Superfund, Toxics, Risk and Waste Management to
 discuss Asbestos Cleanup in Libby, Montana.

Dear Ms. Horinko:

Again, please accept my thanks for joining me on June 20 in a subcommittee hearing of the Senate Environment and Public Works committee to discuss asbestos remediation activities in Libby, Montana, and the ongoing efforts of the Environmental Protection Agency in Libby. I was encouraged to hear you affirm the commitment of Administrator Whitman and yourself to protect the health of the people in Libby. Protecting the long-term health of Libby is my highest priority.

During the hearing you indicated your willingness to personally visit Libby with new Regional Administrator Robby Roberts as well as Deputy Regional Administrator Jack McGraw on July 22. Libby, Montana, is a long way from Washington, D.C. Personal visits like these, from decision-makers such as yourself, are crucial to make sure that federal officials don't miss the urgency of this tragedy.

That is why I have also pressed others to visit Libby, like Administrator Whitman; Assistant Secretary of Health and Human Services Claude Allen; Dr. Hugh Sloan from the regional office of Health and Human Services in Denver; the assistant secretaries for the Mine Safety and Health Administration and Occupational Safety and Health Administration; Dr. Henry Falk of the Agency for Toxic Substance Disease Registry; and representatives from the U.S. Economic Development Administration and state officials.

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As you prepare for your first visit to the community I ask that you make good on your commitment to report to the community and the Lincoln County Commissioners on several items we discussed during the hearing that you agreed to report back to me on by July 20.

First, on June 20 you indicated that EPA's interior cleanup, including removal of insulation in Libby homes, was imminent. You testified that EPA has identified 55 priority properties that you anticipate having completed by the end of the summer of 2002. You also testified that your action memorandum included plans and a budget to clean as many as 800 homes, which you anticipate completing within a two-year time frame. I ask that you be prepared to speak in detail with the community and local elected officials about the specific details of this plan and how the slow start on cleanup may affect your agency's success in meeting your target dates.

I applaud the EPA's decision to remove contaminated insulation from Libby homes. It is important that this begin as soon as possible. I was pleased to learn that EPA has already set aside \$21 million specifically for Libby in its fiscal year 2003 funding request. By the end of 2002 EPA will have spent \$60 million in Libby. We must continue to dedicate the needed resources that will achieve a clean bill of health for Libby.

Second, as you recall, many folks in Libby are greatly concerned about the slow start to EPA's work this construction season. Also, during the hearing and in subsequent meetings with Superfund staff who met with our Libby visitors in my offices in Washington, D.C., we discussed the need to hire Libby people and put them to work sooner rather than later. I am still waiting to hear from your staff about this issue. In addition to the asbestos tragedy, Lincoln County's unemployment rate is higher than in other areas of the state. Putting people back to work in Libby is critical.

Third, I was really pleased to hear your commitment to work with Libby to revitalize the community using Brownfields legislation. Your acknowledgment that EPA's goal is to no longer simply cleanup a community, but to revitalize it too is a commitment I welcome.

Additionally, you offered to research Lincoln County Commissioner John Konzen's concern that the EPA also consider cleanup activities in Troy and Kalispell. Mr. Konzen mentioned that it may be possible that as many as 20 percent of the W.R. Grace workforce lived in these nearby communities. Like former workers and residents who carried contaminated loose fill back to their homes for gardens and other uses, property in these areas may be

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contaminated too. As you recall, you agreed to take a look at this and to take further action if warranted. In a similar vein, Dr. Michael Spence, state medical officer for Montana, also inquired about EPA's action in studying other hotspots across Montana, connected to sites where W.R. Grace vermiculite may have been handled. You expressed a willingness to address those locations if warranted as well.

You also will recall that we discussed at length a perception by folks in Libby that EPA may be backing off its commitment to the community. Your visit so soon after our hearing and your attention to these important questions are crucial to illustrate for folks in Libby EPA's determined commitment to do all that the agency and Administrator Whitman have already committed to do.

In a nutshell, I think Commissioner Konzen said it best: "Good health is all any of us can ask for. A clean bill of health is the most profound mark our federal friends will leave upon our community."

You said to me Ms. Hoxinko, "When we stamp the cleanup done, we will not walk away." That is my promise to you.

Heartfelt assurances like this, backed up with details and dollars, is what Libby needs. Thank you for your partnership.

With best personal regards, I am

Sincerely,



MSB/sga

Cc: Lincoln County Commissioners
Libby EPA Office
Libby Citizens' Advisory Group